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ABSTRACT

A study examined the perceptions of journalism educators regarding ethical conduct in the faculty recruitment process of journalism faculty. Data were gathered by means of a mail survey to a national sample of journalism faculty. Questionnaires were mailed to 490 journalism and mass communication educators with 407 responding. Every third name was selected from a directory of AEJMC-affiliated institutions. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of recruiting concepts on a five-point scale ranging from "very important" to "very unimportant." They were then asked to rate each concept a second time, indicating how they perceived the concept was being practiced. Results revealed that most journalism educators think that ethical considerations that are important to the faculty recruiting process are practiced poorly. Strong concerns identified by respondents include: misrepresentation of facts, tenure and promotion policies; deceptive job advertising; and unfair practices during the interview process. Findings suggest that many educators see problems with the recruiting process even if they are part of the problem. (One table of data is included; 20 references are attached.) (KEH)

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Recruitment of Journalism Faculty:
Do Schools Travel the Ethical High Road?

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RECRUITMENT OF JOURNALISM FACULTY: DO SCHOOLS TRAVEL THE ETHICAL HIGH ROAD?

Essential to the recruitment process of quality college journalism faculty are impressions job candidates form during the recruiting process. No matter what the field, though, potential faculty members expect candor, truthfulness and ethical behavior to pervade the search process. This is especially true in the field of journalism education where ethics has received widespread attention.

Just how ethical is the recruitment of journalism faculty? To determine how ethical the recruitment process is, this study reports results of a mail survey to a national sample of journalism faculty whose perceptions were developed out of their own experiences in applying for teaching positions.

Higher education faces a major recruitment crisis in the next twenty years. While the California State University system needs to hire 8,500 to 11,000 new faculty during the next fifteen years, approximately 65 percent of tenured faculty nationwide will retire by 2009. [1] Recent job listings in journalism and mass communication indicate that educators have ample opportunity to seek other positions,[2] although a research on factors that faculty consider important in choosing a position is relatively sparse. What exists are discipline-specific studies that may have limited generalization to a larger population.

For example, in two studies of recruitment of husband-wife faculty teams, one study reports that while a third of the department chairs in sociology and psychology departments will support the hiring of a professional couple, the job-hunting husband-and-wife team will be equally likely to encounter opposition;[3] in the second study of journalism and mass communication chairpersons in AEJMC-accredited programs, survey results revealed an anti-couple bias in hiring with just 7 percent of the respondents actively supporting the hiring of a professional couple.[4] That study concludes that the "ghosts of anti-nepotism" function as effectively

as once-formal, written anti-nepotism rules did prior to 1972 when they were called discriminatory by the U.S. Department of Health and Welfare's Office of Civil Rights.

In a study of factors that influence nursing faculty choice of position, a survey indicated that it is important to share such things as curriculum objectives, availability of research grants and clinical and community resources, nature of the teaching load and assignments, opportunities to utilize knowledge and skills, a sharing of the philosophy of the college of nursing, and opportunities for continued education.[5] A study of University of Minnesota faculty who were asked to choose what factors had most influenced them to join the Minnesota faculty revealed that the following factors were most frequently mentioned: 1) reputation of the University of Minnesota; 2) salary; 3) academic rank offer; 4) reputation of the department; 5) recreational and cultural facilities.[6]

Several articles and studies pinpoint certain areas in which the search process breaks down. Perhaps the greatest irony in a study comes from a survey of faculty recruited for openings at university libraries that indicated the quality of a university library is taken for granted and that the quality of the libraries is not exploited in faculty recruitment.[7] In another article, a self-described itinerant English professor lamented that he has found "that interviewers are not always knowledgeable of the areas they are hiring in" and that "members of search committees can and sometimes do surprise, irritate, and bewilder interviewees."[8] Yet another English instructor complained of "degrading treatment of applicants" in the job search process, especially with respect to failure to notify unsuccessful job applicants in a timely fashion. The disgruntled instructor wrote:

> While we all know the fate of 95 percent of job applications, why should the remaining candidates receive summary treatment? Although such behavior should be alien to academe, far too often among the supposedly cultured professoriate discourtesy is the rule rather than the exception.[9]

Yet another study has revealed that while advertising does produce results in faculty hiring, the collegial network approach remains the primary recruitment means.[10] The study at the University of Massachusetts indicated that "advertising has not been as successful as proponents had hoped, but it has not been a failure as critics have charged; the survey of department heads found that published advertisements in such places as The Chronicle of Higher Education, The New York Times and professional journals were somewhat effective, although the network method--referrals, phone calls, letters, national conference recruitment--remained as the best recruitment means.[11]

Finally, an education professor at Cleveland State University has developed a three-pronged approach designed to recruit the best possible candidate and to build collegiality for the years ahead.[12] The approach focuses on planning, timing, and the long-term effects of the selection process and is intent upon avoiding the need to publish "search reopened" notices.[13]

Job applicants in other disciplines have complained that they were required to pay their own expenses to interviews or they would not have been considered for the position,[14] and job applicants in journalism and mass communications have expressed dismay over the failure of universities to keep them informed about their application status[15] and search committees going through the motions while knowing all along that the job was going to a specific candidate.[16]

This study will report to what extent the journalism educators surveyed believe that an ethical high road is traveled in the recruitment of journalism faculty and will offer suggestions to improve the process.

Method

Questionnaires were mailed to 490 journalism and mass communication educators with 407 (83%) responding. Names were selected from a directory of AEJMC-affiliated institutions. Every third name among professors, associate professors, and assistant professors was selected. Lecturers and adjunct professors were not included since it was thought

that neither group ordinarily took an active part in the recruitment process. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of recruiting concepts on a five-point scale ranging from "very important" to "very unimportant." They were then asked to rate each concept a second time, indicating how they perceived the concept was being practiced. This was also rated on a five-point scale ranging from "very well" to "very poor."

Results and Discussion

The age of the respondents ranged from 29 to 67 and the mean was 47. Ninety-eight percent indicated they were white, four respondents said they were African-American, two Oriental, two Hispanic and seven did not indicate their race. Nearly 84 percent of the respondents were male. The teaching experience of the respondents ranged from less than one year to 36 years with a mean of 13 years. Fourteen of the 407 respondents indicated no mass media experience while two reported 36 years of media experience. The mean was 12 years.

Nearly 65 percent were associate or full professors. More than half (54.8 percent) had Ph.d.s and another 4 percent held Ed.D.s. Slightly more than 70 percent reported they held teaching positions and one-fourth (25.5%) said they were administrators or part-time administrators.

Table One presents data on certain ethical situations that may be encountered during the recruitment process. As an organizing tool, these situations have been divided into four categories: ethical situations, job characteristics, personal considerations, and the interview process. In these situations, applicants might be given specific information during a job interview and later find that actual circumstances fall short of expectations.

Nearly all respondents (98.3%) indicated they considered it important that administrators avoid misrepresenting facts when recruiting. Yet, only 58 percent believed that was the common practice. Similarly, 96.5 percent of the respondents thought that applicants should avoid misrepresenting facts during job interviews. However, just 50.3 percent believed this was

done. In some cases the department administrator may be caught in the middle of unethical practices. In a survey section reserved for comments, one such administrator noted that "the dean at this university had a reputation for misrepresentation." The administrator took note of the dean's "promise," later refuted, that previous teaching would count toward tenure, his "assurance" to support the development of a graduate program, and his "guarantee" of a fully funded one semester sabbatical for assistant professors before tenure review. None of the promises developed into reality.

In the areas of salary increases and release time allotted for research, more discrepancies cropped up. While 92 percent attached importance to an honest appraisal of future salary expectations, only 52 percent perceived such honesty to be the actual practice. In addition, 93 percent considered honesty in assigning release time for research important, but only 52 percent perceived such honesty to be practiced.

False and deceptive advertising concerned many respondents although misrepresentation of facts, tenure and promotion policies, release time, and travel funds were of paramount importance. Still, 97 percent considered honesty in advertising important, while 70.9 percent perceived such honesty to be practiced. However, the most common complaint registered in comments on the questionnaires concerned job advertisements. Several applicants echoed the complaint of this respondent: "The biggest ethical problem is the false advertising that entices a Ph.D. with years of full-time professional experience, lots of years of teaching, and excellent references, student evaluations, and publications into applying for jobs that hold out the promise of high salary and rank. Those ads, I have found with cruel regularity, are nothing short of fraudulent!"

Along the same line, another respondent noted, "The most unethical practice I know of is advertising for positions that are almost certain to be filled from the inside by temporary faculty, existing faculty, or staff or friends ... We should be honest with the applicant about his or her chances ... We seldom are, in my experience."

To help avoid problems in the employee-employer relationship, 82 percent maintained that key points discussed in job interviews should be put in writing, but only 29.5 percent perceived this to be practiced. And, just as in other disciplines, journalism and mass communication educators (96.5%) wanted unsuccessful candidates to be notified in writing, but only 59.3 percent thought this was the practice. Respondents clearly wanted a position opening described precisely (see Job Characteristics in Table One). More than 89 percent considered it important that administrators provide an honest appraisal of the awarding of rank, but only 63.2 percent thought such appraisals were being offered. Most respondents (93.1%) wanted clear guidelines for gaining tenure, but only 41.7 percent perceived this to be the practice. More than 86 percent attached importance to accurate details on research and travel funding, but only 42.5 percent thought such details were provided.

One respondent noted that "faculty members have a tendency to be dour during these searches." He further admonished that "they would be well-advised to show some enthusiasm," adding that "one school was scratched from my list because faculty appeared not to enjoy or find satisfaction in their work." The same respondent also noted that "the infamous roundtable faculty interview should be better organized so that trenchant questions, rather than "obtuse and irrelevant questions don't share the platform." He asserted: "Too many faculty members apparently base their votes on their assessment of a candidate's response to an idiosyncratic question only that person cares about. That's hardly collegial."

More than 81 percent of the respondents expected an accounting of existing problems in the journalism program, while only 26.7 perceived such problems were discussed in the recruiting process. Nearly 86 percent wanted an honest appraisal of quality of life in the community; only 60.7 percent thought such appraisals were generally offered. And, almost 57 percent expected an accounting of service expectations; only 25.2 percent perceived that such an accounting was given in practice. Such findings perhaps prompted a respondent to comment" "Too often, an administrator or faculty has decided upon the exact person--or type of person--desired.

An applicant is literally taken fro a ride or flight to put on an appropriate show of searching."

Respondents also evaluated personal consideration (see Personal Considerations in Table One). Respondents agreed that gender (97.3%) and race (97%) should make no difference in the hiring process, yet 68 percent perceived that they were sometimes considerations in the hiring process. There appeared to be less concern (57%) about the job needs of spouses although nearly 33 percent thought administrators exhibited such concern.

Finally, respondents considered some aspects of the interview process itself (see The Interview Process in Table One). Most educators (97%) did not consider "wining and dining" to be important in the hiring process; yet, some (27.7%) believed that applicants are subjected to such an approach. Most respondents expressed a desire to meet with journalism students, but many (54.8%) thought such an opportunity was not always granted. Slightly more than half (51.9%) of the respondents indicated it was important that an applicant lecture in a class situation and be observed and evaluated although only 30.2 percent perceived this was practiced. finally, about half (45.7%) thought that visits should be allowed with faculty that have been denied tenure although just 24.2 percent believed this was common practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Hulteng has written that "conduct that is ethical--for example, telling the truth--is embraced not because someone is standing by with whip and lawbook to make sure you don't transgress, but because you have made an inner commitment."[17] According to the results of this survey, that "inner commitment" to be ethical often collides with reality as most journalism and mass communication educators think that ethical considerations that are important to the faculty recruiting process are practiced poorly.

The experiences of these respondents can offer guidance to job seekers, search committees and to administrators. The job search is indeed two-way communication, and through studies of the recruitment process,

comments from respondents to this survey, and conclusions drawn by the authors of this study, a picture begins to develop of the ways and means by which the recruitment process can travel the high road and result in faculty recruiting that is important to the job applicant in terms of both the ideal and the way the search is practiced.

Several respondents offered advice for applicants for jobs in journalism and mass communication education:

--Contact faculty members who have left the program.

--Expect search committees to contact unlisted references. One respondent who had chaired a search committee observed, "It is very important to talk to people other than an applicant's references, someone without a vested interest in attracting the person to the job."

--If uncertain about promises extended by administrators, ask that specific details be presented in writing before accepting the position.

--Don't pursue positions you are not seriously considering. Administrators and search committees do not appreciate applicants who feign interest in a position any more than applicants appreciate search committees that are feigning interest while planning to hire someone else.

--Don't verbally accept a position but later refuse it when you receive a better offer in the meantime[18] since such an action by a candidate can be costly for an institution.[19]

--Demand to talk to students. One respondent noted that graduate students can offer special insight into the problems of a department.

Both faculty members and administrators offered advice on searches:

--Carefully check the backgrounds of applicants. Don't take for granted what is listed on a curriculum vitae.

--Provide itineraries well in advance of the expected visit. One respondent noted that "for some reason, pre-arrangements to identify faculty members at airports are sometimes not made. We meet by chance, or perhaps after many other passengers clear out of the terminal."

--Encourage the faculty to show enthusiasm.

--Be sure that service and research requirements are as clearly explained as the course load. Several respondents noted that little or no mention was made of job responsibilities beyond the courses to be taught.

--Explain promotion and tenure requirements. One applicant was told by a dean one and one-half years after being hired, "You can be a mediocre teacher, but if you are a great researcher, you'll be certain to get tenure. Conversely, if you're a great teacher and a so-so researcher, you won't."

--Notify unsuccessful applicants since they may apply again. Several respondents complained that they never received so much as a form letter much less a note expressing regrets.

--Be knowledgeable about fringe benefits. Applicants resent being misled by false information on fringe benefits.

--State a salary range instead of falling back on "salary competitive" when advertising. Respondents said they preferred a stated range to tell them whether they might be interested and observed that such a practice could save the time of the applicant and the search committee.

On the positive side, many respondents, including one who said he had interviewed at eight institutions, noted they were favorably impressed with the majority of schools and praised administrators and search committees for their candidness and sensitivity. Several respondents raised points not specifically covered in the survey, but which they found annoying. Some of these points included:

--Professional experience is sometimes denigrated and in some cases is considered a liability. One respondent wrote: "A terminal degree carries too much weight in this academic area. Our area should teach and encourage research, but it needs to bring in reporters and editors who are out there fighting the battles and offer them job security based on expertise and <u>not</u> just lofty, theoretical principles!"

--"Raiding" is becoming an increasingly serious problem.

--Applicants have a right to determine whether faculty democracy or governance is a rule of thumb or whether a dictator uses teaching assignment and research rewards to impose policy.

--Because of a fear of lawsuits, former employers are reluctant to say anything negative about previous employees.

--Black Ph.D.s lack confidence to teach in predominantly white universities and they do not apply and end up getting jobs a "black" colleges.

As the faculty recruitment process grows more competitive and supplies of available applicants in some emphases continue to dwindle, a very important lesson that can be drawn from this study is that administrators, search committees and job applicants can no longer take things for granted as faculty recruiting becomes more sophisticated and subject to intense examination. Part of the examination should be to determine how ethical a job search is and the taking of steps to ensure that recruiting is conducted in a way that truthfulness, trust and honesty are the hallmarks of this academic exercise.

Much of this can be accomplished by constructing a checklist of measures to take to ensure that the next departmental job search is conducted in a way that things that appear to be important to the job candidates are practiced in the recruiting process. For example, if candidates think that notification of their status for a job search is important, departmental secretaries could be given regularly updated lists of people no longer under consideration so that applicants can easily find out where they stand. Plus, secretaries or search committee chairs could be given a checklist of deficiencies, such as lack of publications, to explain to unsuccessful candidates why they are no longer being considered.

Likewise, departments should be candid and open with job applicants about whether an internal applicant has the inside track on a position. While teaching and research requirements remain highly important, it is essential that search committees and administrators remain flexible to changes in society so as not to restrict the pool of applicants. One study has found that it is only a "minor inconvenience" to set special scheduling to assure that one member of a husband-wife team hired would be available for emergency child care.[20] Still, a sensitivity to such an issue, as well as others that may develop as society changes, is of particular

importance as the supply of faculty applicants grows more and more competitive during the 1990s and beyond.

The message from this survey of 407 journalism educators strongly suggests that many educators see problems with the recruiting process even if they are by their position part of the problem. Solutions to any perceived problems need not be ignored nor be elusive since many of the suggestions for improvement and for a higher standard of ethics in the recruiting process employ common-sense approaches to attainment.

The findings in this study might not to be generalizable to other disciplines whose criteria for hiring may differ. In addition, more research/analysis needs to be done to delve into comparisons between private and public institutions, differences in academic rank and gender, longevity of service, and distinguishing between respondents who teach exclusively and those who do some administrative work along with their teaching.

Notes

1. Sandra Wilcox, "Task Force Develops Goals on Faculty Recruitment," The California State University Academic Senator, May 27, 1988, p. 6.

2. The January 1989 AEJMC Newsletter listed 109 journalism educator position openings.

3. Suzanne Pingree, Matilda Butler, William Paisley and Robert Hawkins, "Anti-Nepotism's Ghost: Attitudes of Administrators Toward Hiring Professional Couples," Psychology of Women, 2:22-29 (Fall 1987).

4. Suzanne Pingree and Matilda Butler, "Survey Shows Anti-Couple Bias in Hiring, Writers Say," Journalism Educator, 33:61-63 (October 1978).

5. Shirley Halpin Seyfried, Carolyn Crowell, Eva H. Erickson, and Patricia Ostmoe, "Factors Influencing Faculty Choice of Position," Nursing Outlook, November 1977, p. 692-696.

6. J.E. Stecklein, "Research on Faculty Recruitment and Motivation" in Studies of College Faculty by Logan Wilson and others, Boulder, Colo., Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1961, p. 11-34.

7. E. Dale Cluff and David J. Murrah, "The Influence of Library Resources on Faculty Recruitment and Retention," The Journal of Academic Librarianship 13:19-23 (March 1987).

8. Dennis Chase, "The Job Application Process for English Teachers," College Teaching, Vol. 36, No. 3, Summer 1988, p. 104.

9. D.J. Trela, "The Job Search Too Often Brings Degrading Treatment of Applicants," The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 29, 1989, p. B-3.

10. Laurence R. Marcus, "Has Advertising Produced Results in Faculty Hiring?" Educational Record, 57:248-250 (Fall 1976).

11. Marcus (Fall 1976) op. cit.

12. Saundra J. Tracy, "Finding the Right Person—and Collegiality," College Teaching, Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 1986), p. 59-62.

13. Tracy (Spring 1986) op. cit.

14. Suzanne Perry, "Academic Jobseeking Today a Traumatic Experience," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Oct. 12, 1983, p. 22-23.

15. Perry (Oct. 12, 1983) op. cit.; see also Grant Ellison, "Point of View: Waiting to Hear from the Search Committee," The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 6, 1984, p. 64.

16. Perry (Oct. 12, 1983) op. cit.

17. John L. Hulteng, The Messenger's Motives: Ethical Problems of the News Media, Englewood Cliffs: N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976, p. 7.

18. Michael Liberman, "Point of View: Jilted in Academe," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Feb. 8, 1984, p. 80.

19. The actual expenses of recruiting college faculty has been estimated to be as much as $6,000 per person. See Jeffrey J. Hallett, "Why Does Recruitment Cost So Much?" Personnel Administrator, 31:22-26 (December 1986).

20. Karen A. Foss and Stephen W. Littlejohn, "Couples in Communication: Problems and Prospects," Association for Communication Administration Bulletin (August 1989), p. 85-86.

TABLE ONE

Job Applicants' Rating of Specific Hiring Concepts and Their Perception of How the Concepts are Practiced

	Importance of Concept (mean)[a] (% important)	Perception of how concept is practiced (mean) (% well practiced)
Ethical situations		
Administrators should avoid misrepresenting facts in recruiting new faculty members.	1.106[b] 98.3%	2.326 58.0%
Salary increases discussed with the applicant during the job interview should coincide with actual salary increases.	1.427 92.0%	2.457 52.2%
Release time to be allotted for research discussed during the job interview should coincide with the actual amount of time allotted.	1.4 93.1%	2.505 52.1%
Notice of teaching positions in journalism and mass communication in magazines, newspapers or circulars should avoid false and deceptive advertising.	1.167 97.0%	2.041 70.9%
To help avoid problems that may arise in the employee-employer relationship, administrators should put key points discussed during job interviews in writing.	1.737 82.0%	3.159 29.5%
Applicants should avoid misrepresenting facts or engaging in deceptive practices during job interviews.	1.158 96.5%	2.5 50.3%
Administrators should notify unsuccessful job candidates in writing.	1.257 96.5%	2.402 59.3%
Job Characteristics		
Administrators should clearly explain guidelines for gaining tenure during the job interview.	1.342 93.1%	2.796 41.7%
Research and travel funds discussed with applicants during the interview should coincide with actual funds provided.	1.616 86.2%	2.699 42.5%

TABLE ONE
(Continued)

Existing "problems" with the journalism program should be brought to the attention of the applicant.	1.823 81.3%	3.192 26.7%
Administrators should discuss dissension among faculty members with job applicants.	3.002 32.4%	3.189 22.3%
Exogenous or outside factors should be brought to the applicant's attention by administrators. (These include such things as an honest appraisal of the quality of life in the community– schools, traffic, cost of living, cultural activities, etc.)	1.718 85.9%	2.367 60.7%
Administrators should present an accurate description of teaching duties during job interviews.	1.207 97.5%	2.227 65.3%
Achievement of rank discussed during the job interview should coincide with the awarding of rank.	1.454 89.2%	2.188 63.2%
Administrators should give service expectations equal emphasis with research and teaching expectations discussed during the job interview.	2.449 56.9%	3.098 25.2%
<u>Personal Considerations</u>		
Women applicants should receive the same consideration as men applicants who appear equal in ability.	1.156 97.3%	2.090 68.4%
Black applicants should receive the same consideration as white applicants who appear equal in ability.	1.165 97.0%	2.049 68.8%
Administrators should be sensitive to the needs of two-career families.	2.435 57.0%	2.898 32.9%
Administrators should ask applicants questions about their personal or family life.	3.809 16.9%	2.803 13.8%
<u>The Interview Process</u>		
Administrators should allow visits with faculty members who have been denied tenure.	2.623 45.7%	3.160 24.2%
Applicants should meet with journalism students sometime during the job interviews.	1.793 79.3%	2.491 54.8%
Applicants should teach a class and be observed and evaluated by faculty or administrators during the interview process.	2.511 51.9%	3.071 30.2%

TABLE ONE
(Continued)

The better that applicants are "wined and dined" during a job interview, the more likely they are to join a faculty.	3.719 9.7%	2.931 27.7%
	n of cases	407[c]

[a] The lower the mean, the more importance attached to the concept.

[b] The means on every statement shown are significantly different by the t-test, beyond the p=.05 level.

[c] Because some respondents did not respond to all items, n was lower for some items